

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A drum comprising a fixed cylindrical body with a perforated lateral surface surrounded by a holed roll driven in rotation relative to the axis ~~(O)~~ of the cylindrical body, and means ~~intended to create~~ for creating a partial vacuum inside the body, characterized by a water-impermeable partition subdividing the interior of the body into ~~two~~ first and second compartments delimited by the partition and respectively by a first and a second portion of the lateral surface, and both the first and second compartments being placed under partial vacuum by the means for creating a partial vacuum ~~intended to create same~~.

2. (currently amended) The drum as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~it~~ the drum is associated with a conveyor tangential to the drum at a point of contact and the first compartment begins opposite the point of contact and ends opposite a point of the lateral surface

downstream, in the direction of rotation of the ~~sleeve~~
holed roll, of the point of contact.

3. (previously presented) The drum as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that the first compartment extends over a sector of the body.

4. (currently amended) The drum as claimed in claim 1, characterized ~~by~~ in that the means for creating a partial vacuum include a vacuum means associated with specific to each compartment intended to create for creating a partial vacuum in the associated compartment.

5. (currently amended) The drum as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the ratio of the total area of the perforations, per unit of surface, to the area of the lateral surface on which they lie is greater for the first compartment than for the second compartment.

6. (currently amended) The drum as claimed in claim 1, characterized by a pressurized water injector on the portion of the roll which passes opposite the portion of the lateral surface of the second compartment.

7. (previously presented) The drum as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that the water injector is disposed angularly in a manner immediately adjacent to the first compartment.

8. (currently amended) A production unit for a nonwoven material, comprising a spunbond tower with a conveyor leading to a drum, characterized in that the drum is as defined in claim 1.

9. (currently amended) The ~~installation~~ production unit as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that the ~~tower~~ conveyor ~~and the~~ is tangential to the drum ~~conveyor~~ ~~are one and the same conveyor.~~

10. (currently amended) The ~~installation~~ production unit as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that the drum is mounted directly downstream of the tower, ~~that is~~ ~~to say~~ without interposition of a device causing the drawing of the material.

11. (currently amended) A method of producing a nonwoven material, ~~characterized in that an installation~~ comprising the steps of: providing the production unit as claimed in claim 8, operating the spun tower to

deposit filaments onto the conveyor for conveyance at a conveyor linear speed to a lateral surface of the drum, rotating the drum at a drum lateral surface linear speed to receive the deposited filaments is used and maintaining the conveyor linear speed of the tower conveyor and/or of the tangential conveyor is at a value greater than the drum lateral surface linear speed of the drum.

Claims 12 and 13 (cancelled).

14. (new) A nonwoven material produced in accordance with the method of claim 11.

15. (new) The nonwoven material produced in accordance with the method of claim 14, characterized in that the ratio of the tensile strength in the machine direction to that in the cross direction is less than 1.2.

16. (new) The nonwoven material produced in accordance with the method of claim 15, characterized in that the ratio of the tensile strength in the machine direction to that in the cross direction is approximately 1.

17. (new) The nonwoven material produced in accordance with the method of claim 15, characterized in that the ratio of the tensile strength in the machine direction to that in the cross direction is less 1.

18. (new) An apparatus for producing a nonwoven material comprising a first conveyor for conveying a preform of nonwoven material, a drum for hydroentangling the preform, a second conveyor arranged between the first conveyor and the drum, the second conveyor being tangent to the drum, and an aspiration device arranged so that the preform passes from the first conveyor to the second conveyor.

19. (new) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the drum is above the second conveyor and the first conveyor is under the second conveyor.

20. (new) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the first and second conveyors respectively have projected dimensions in a horizontal plane, and the second conveyor projected dimension is shorter than the first conveyor horizontal projection.

21. (new) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the aspiration device is located inside the second conveyor.

22. (new) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein a second aspiration device is arranged inside the drum.